



Right Question
Institute

A Catalyst for Microdemocracy

*The Right Question Strategy for Building
Partnerships with Parents*

**Strengthening Parents' Skills to Ask
Better Questions about Decisions**

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The Right Question School-Family Partnership Strategy

Components of the Strategy

The Support, Monitor, and Advocate Model

The identification of three distinct roles parents should play in their children's education.

The Question Formulation Technique

A step-by-step process that allows parents to produce their own questions, improve their questions and strategize on how to use their questions.

✓ The Framework for Accountable Decision Making

An analytical structure that allows parents to focus on key decisions, ask their own questions and apply criteria for accountable decision-making – questions about the reasons, the process and their role in the process.

About this resource

This resource provides a rationale for working with parents on how to ask questions about decisions. It includes a step-by-step facilitation guide and a facilitation template. The facilitator can lead parents through an activity where key components of the Right Question Strategy are used in combination – the Question Formulation Technique and the Framework for Accountable Decision Making.

The Framework for Accountable Decision Making (FADM)

The Framework for Accountable Decision Making (FADM) is effective as a stand-alone activity or in combination with the other two components of the Right Question School-Family Partnership Strategy. This framework builds parents' skills to understand and learn to participate more effectively in decisions that impact their children's education.

The FADM provides a process for parents to:

- understand and apply the definition of a decision.
- analyze decisions using three specific criteria: the reasons for the decision, process for making it, and their own role in that process.
- gather specific information by asking questions about the reasons for the decision, the process for making it, and how they can play a role in the process.

Benefits of Using the FADM with Parents

Teachers and school staff report that parents who have learned the FADM participate most effectively and productively in decisions.

The framework:

- provides a simple structure for parents to participate more effectively in decisions that affect their children.
- produces distinctive changes in three specific areas:

Cognitive: Parents gain knowledge of what constitutes a decision, how to identify them and how to ask questions about decisions.

Affective: Parents feel more confident participating in decisions and asking questions about decisions.

Behavioral: Parents produce, improve, and strategize on how to use their questions. They become more active and better informed participants.

The Framework for Accountable Decision Making and Principles of Democratic Decision-Making

The three key elements of the Framework for Accountable Decision Making (FADM)—Reason, Process, and Role— follow fundamental democratic decision making principles.

The chart below summarizes the three key elements of the FADM and how they relate to three fundamental principles of decision-making in a democracy: legitimacy, transparency, and opportunities for participation.

Three Key Elements in Decision Making from the FADM		Three Fundamental Democratic Decision-Making Principles
<p><i>Reason:</i> Should help explain or provide a basis for the decision—policies, standards, regulations, etc.</p>		<p><i>Legitimacy:</i> The decision must be based on policies and standards and rules that are fairly applied.</p>
<p><i>Process:</i> Helps explain how the decision was made—the steps taken, information used, meetings held, protocols used, place, time, and people involved.</p>		<p><i>Transparency</i> The process for making the decision must be visible to all.</p>
<p><i>Role:</i> The part parents play in the decision making process.</p>		<p><i>Opportunities for Participation</i> There must be ways for people who will be affected by the decision to participate in the process.</p>

Facilitating the Framework for Accountable Decision Making with Parents

Facilitator's Instructions

- Individuals: 7-15 minutes
Follow guide and use the template **Practice Identifying Decisions and Asking Questions about Decisions**.
- Groups: 30-40 minutes
Use chart paper so participants can follow the work being done with the questions. You can use the template as an outline for facilitating the process.
For example:
 - Identifying decisions, 7 minutes
 - Discussing the rules, 2 minutes
 - Producing questions, 4-5 minutes
 - Working with closed and open-ended questions, 5 minutes (optional)
 - Prioritizing questions, 4 minutes
 - Sharing the work, 5 minutes
 - Reflection, 5 minutes.

Welcome participant. Give participants a quick overview of the process they will be participating in.

1. Define the term *decision*.

A decision is choosing one option from among two or more.

2. Provide examples of everyday decisions.

Example: the decision about what to eat for breakfast.

Options: Coffee and toast or Cereal with milk

Any of these options you choose is the decision you have made.

3. Ask participant to name a decision they made - Use worksheet.

_____ or _____

Tip: The goal is not to go deep into decisions but to provide a working definition. Use simple daily examples that participants can relate to. Make sure participants understand the concept of options.

4. Introduce and define key elements in decision making: reason, process, and role.

Introduce and define one key element at a time and ask participant to apply it to the decision s/he made.

The Reason: the basis for a decision.

Name the reason for choosing what to have for breakfast.

Ask participants to name the reason for the decision, and make them aware that there are good reasons for their decision.

The Process: the steps and actions taken, people involved, information used.

Name the process you used to make the decision about what to have for breakfast.

Ask participants to name the process for making their decision, and make them aware that there is a process when they make decisions.

Your Role: the part you play in making the decision (role in decision making process).

Ask participants to think about their role in making the decision, and make them aware that they had a role in the decision.

Tip: Participants should understand the differences between reasons, process, and role. Facilitators should prepare simple daily-life examples to quickly show these differences.

5. Instruct participants to produce questions about decisions using the Question Formulation Technique.

Introduce the rules for producing questions

- Ask as many questions as you can
- Do not stop to try to answer or judge the questions
- Write each question exactly as it comes to mind
- Change any thoughts or statements into questions

Ask participants to think about what might be difficult in following the rules

- Introduce the Question Focus (Q-Focus). The Question Focus must include a decision.
 - ⇒ *Your child has been referred to be evaluated*
 - ⇒ *A recommendation has been made for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child*
- Ask participants to produce questions about the QFocus following the rules.
- Ask participants to prioritize questions.
Choose the three questions that are most important for you

6. Ask participants to identify questions about reason, process, and role.

Instruct participants to find in their list one question about:

- a. the reason,

- b. the process,
- c. their role.

Instruct participants to ask a new question if they don't find one quickly.

Tip: The goal is to identify questions in all three areas (reason, process, role). Participants may try to find a question that includes all three. Make sure they find a question for each.

Tip: Participants may have trouble categorizing questions from their list. If they can't quickly find a question that fits a category, then they should produce a new one. The facilitators need to be ready to give instructions about producing a new question.

7. Ask participants to reflect. They can reflect individually and then share in small groups or as a large group on one or more of the following:

- What did you learn?
- How/Where can you use it?
- What value do you see in:
 - a. asking questions about the reasons for a decision?
 - b. asking questions about the process for making decisions?
 - c. asking questions about your role?
- What could happen if you ask questions about the reasons and process but not about your role?

Practice Identifying Decisions

DECISIONS

- *A decision is choosing an option from among two or more.*

Today, I made a decision about:

Options I had:

_____ **or** _____

Option chosen:

- *The option that is chosen is the decision.*

THINKING ABOUT MY DECISION

My reason for choosing the option:

My process for choosing the option:

My role in the process of choosing the option:

Asking Questions about Decisions

Rules for producing question:

- Ask as many questions as you can about the topic
- Do not stop to try to answer or judge the questions
- Write each question exactly as it comes to mind
- Change any thoughts or statements into questions

In following the rules, it might be difficult to:

Question Focus:

Choose the three questions that are most important for you. Mark them with an X.

Find questions about reason, process, and role as follows:

- find one question that will help you learn about the **reason**(s) for the decision (the basis) Write the word “Reasons” beside the question.
- find one question that will help you learn about the **process** for making the decision (steps taken, information used, people involved...). Write the word “Process” beside the question.

- find one question that will help you learn about **your role** or **the role** of the people affected by the decision (your part in the process). Write the word “Role” beside the question.

Reflection

What did you learn	How can you use it?